

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-13

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 182996

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KS, US

SUBJECT: ROK AMB CONCERN OVER PRESS TREATMENT OF
ASSASSINATION

1. KOREAN AMBASSADOR HAHM CALLED ON DPTY ASST SEC SNEIDER AUGUST 19 UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO EXPRESS ROKG CONCERN OVER RECENT EDITORIALS IN US PRESS, PARTICULARLY IN STAR-NEWS, SUGGESTING THAT ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST PRESIDENT AND MRS. PARK WAS NOT SURPRISING IN VIEW OF REPRESSION OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL OPPOSITION BY PARK. HAHM SAID HE HAD ANTICIPATED THAT US PRESS WOULD STRONGLY DENOUNCE ASSASSINATION AND SEE INCIDENT AS JUSTIFICATION FOR EMERGENCY MEASURES BUT WAS TAKEN ABACK WHEN EDITORIALS PICTURED PARK AS AUTHOR OF TRAGEDY. HAHM WONDERED IF EDITORIALS IN ANY WAY REFLECTED OFFICIAL US THINKING.

2. SNEIDER SAID PRESS REFLECTS PUBLIC OPINION RATHER THAN OFFICIAL VIEWS AND SAID WE HAD PUBLICLY DESCRIBED INCIDENT AS TRAGIC AND MISGUIDED AND COULD NOT AGREE WITH PRESS VIEW
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THAT PARK BROUGHT IT UPON HIMSELF.

3. NEVERTHELESS, SNEIDER CONTINUED, IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT HAHM AND THE ROKG RECOGNIZE STRENGTH OF FEELING AMONG AMERICAN PEOPLE ABOUT KOREA. GIVEN THE KOREAN WAR AND THE HEAVY CASUALTIES WHICH AMERICAN FORCES SUFFERED, AMERICAN

PUBLIC HAS STRONG, SPECIAL BOND AND INTEREST IN KOREA AND MANY HAVE IDENTIFIED US SUPPORT FOR THE ROKG WITH DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH KOREA. SNEIDER STRESSED THAT AMERICAN PUBLIC INTEREST ABOUT KOREA IS A POSITIVE ASSET WHICH SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO DISSIPATE.

4. HAHM ALSO EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN ABOUT POSITION OF PRESIDENT FORD ON KOREA GIVEN STRONG EDITORIAL ATTACKS. SNEIDER STRESSED CONTINUITY OF US POLICY TOWARD KOREA CITING AUGUST 9 MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT TO PRESIDENT PARK. PROBLEM IS TO GENERATE CONTINUED SUPPORT OF AMERICAN PUBLIC AND CONGRESS, FOR US PROGRAMS AND ACTIONS NEEDED IN DEFENSE OF KOREAN SECURITY. IF THIS SUPPORT DIMINISHES AS A RESULT OF REACTION TO INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN KOREA, IT WILL BE HARDER TO MAINTAIN SUPPORT FOR KOREAN SECURITY. INGERSOLL

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